

64402 WALTERS,

~~VERNON~~

orig Veterans of  
Foreign Wars

(orig under Walters)

SPEECH

by

LT. GENERAL VERNON A. WALTERS

before

NATIONAL CONVENTION

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Los Angeles

20 August 1975

Commander-in-Chief, Fellow Veterans and  
Distinguished Guests:

I am particularly happy to have this opportunity to address this National Convention of this great organization, of which I am proud to say I am one of the members... this organization which treasures the love of our country and cherishes the values that have made America great and free. My pleasure at being here today is increased by seeing sitting here Leon Turrou, who is the Commander of the Paris Post, as you know, and probably does more to project a favorable image of the United States than anybody else I know, official or private.

And looking back across the gulf of thirty-four years I see here to the time when I was a young private, my tough, great First Sergeant, Dom Volpe, who did send me to Officers Candidate School.

But, today I want to talk to you about intelligence: what it is and why we need it. Intelligence is more vital to our nation today than at any time in its history. Modern intelligence is the painstaking collection and

analysis of facts and actions of foreign governments that may in some way affect the future of our nation. Intelligence must be timely or it is not intelligence at all; it is simply history. It must be operational in the sense that it covers the problems with which our policymakers have to deal. And they must have good intelligence if they are to establish sound policies.

Why do we need it? We need it because we live in a small world that is growing smaller every day. In the old days they used to say the United States was unreachable and unbeatable. Unfortunately we no longer enjoy those advantages.

Why do we need it? Well all we need to do is to look at the world we live in. Yes, there is detente; but let us look at what is happening in that detente. We see the Soviet Union deploying four new types of third generation intercontinental ballistic missiles, and we may be seeing the beginnings of a fifth different type that they are also deploying. We see them building larger submarines with more tubes to launch intercontinental ballistic missiles. We see them developing aircraft with a capability against the United States. We see them adding tanks to every rifle division in the Soviet Army. We

see them improving the training of their personnel and all of the equipment in the hands of their personnel. This is what the Soviets are doing today. And the Chinese are either doing it or will be doing it tomorrow, and not since Valley Forge have any other countries had the opportunity or the capability against the United States which exists today. And yet, at this, the time of the greatest need for intelligence in our nation's history, we see a massive attack against our nation's intelligence. An effort to make it appear immoral, shady, un-American. And the curious thing is that this effort is not just going on in the United States--it's going on against all the intelligence services of our allies--in Britain, or France, or West Germany, or Italy. It may be a coincidence; you can draw your own conclusions on that.

But now there is a great effort to tell you that all this stuff is very immoral and the Founding Fathers wouldn't have liked it. Well, in this bicentennial year, I have done a little research on the Founding Fathers in intelligence. I've come up with some pretty interesting things. George Washington, the father of our country, was probably one of the greatest intelligence

users in American history. He used it in every sense. One of the things I learned, among others, was that he organized at least two attempts to kidnap Benedict Arnold and you know what he was going to do with him when he got him! He operated a listening post; he bugged the British headquarters in Philadelphia. Thank God he did!

You know, now you have this idea we shouldn't keep any secrets; we should let everything hang out; we should tell everybody everything. Well, let me quote you George Washington on that subject. He wrote a letter to his Chief of Intelligence in New Jersey, Colonel Elias Dayton, and this is what he said and I quote and I know this one by heart: "The need for procuring good intelligence is so evident that I need say nothing more about it. All that remains for me is to tell you that these matters must be kept as secret as possible and for the lack of such secrecy they generally fail, no matter how well planned or promising the outlook." That's how George Washington felt about splashing our secrets all over the place.

Benjamin Franklin understood the use of intelligence. For three years before the Revolution, from 1772 to 1775, he was the Assistant Postmaster of the British Colonies

in North America. And do you know what he was doing? He was opening the British's mail, and they caught him and they fired him. You can come down from that time until now. What did President Truman say in the late 1950s? President Truman said, "It matters not to the United States whether its secrets become known through the action of spies or through publication. In both cases the damage to the United States is exactly the same. And I for one," said Mr. Truman, "do not believe that the best interests of our country are served by going on the principle that everybody has the right to know all of our military secrets."

We are now engaged in a great experiment to determine whether any great nation can run its secret intelligence service, so to speak, in a gold fish bowl. Now we may succeed, because we are a very unusual people; but if we do it will be just like going to the moon--we'll have been the only ones who ever did it.

We believe these investigations can be healthy; they can be productive, provided that they are conducted in a positive, constructive and responsible fashion and they do not cripple American intelligence. The safety of the United States is far too precious to become the football--the political football--for anybody's ambitions.

We as Americans fully accept our American way of ensuring proper oversight--proper Congressional oversight--over our intelligence systems. And here again, we feel this can work providing it is handled responsibly. We can make it work and we will make it work, providing it operates with fairness and discretion and without sweeping collective judgments. We cannot resist the advance of Communism if we are tied hand and foot and our pockets are turned inside out and the contents are exposed for every foreigner to look at. We cannot operate with all of our secrets being turned out for public view.

Not long ago I saw a cartoon. It showed a couple at the movies, and one said to the other, "You know, this must be a real old film; the CIA are the good guys." That tells you the kind of environment we have to operate in today. The use of intemperate language portrays those who serve our country in intelligence as the real enemies of the country, the real threat to our freedoms, and this is outrageous treatment for people who are serving our nation loyally and often in lonely and dangerous ways.

I am not an old CIA man--I came there three and a half years ago--and I want to tell you these are great people; they're Americans just like you--they live by the same standards and have the same values. And I want to tell you that I am as proud of my association with these people in

American intelligence as I am of my associates in the Armed Forces over a long period of years.

Because of a few overzealous people, who may have done some improper things over the long span of 27 years, the honorable men and women who work in intelligence are being subjected to a torrent of mud and innuendo and they deserve better than this from those whose freedoms they are guarding.

We see in all of this an effort to create in America some sort of a new caste of untouchables: people who work in CIA who should be shunned by all decent citizens and are unfit for further employment after they leave. Well, I don't think it will work because I trust the fairness and understanding of the American people.

You know, I marvel in a sense how relatively little we've been hurt by this. At a time when we have had large cuts in personnel in American intelligence, we have to rely more on the assistance of our foreign friends and I marvel at their steadfastness in many cases. But the one thing we will never be able to judge is how many people would have come to us with information and who didn't because they were afraid they'd read their names on the front pages of our newspapers. This is something we will never know. I am not going to tell you that over 27 years and the tens of thousands of people who have passed through



the organization for which I work, that we've not had some bad apples. We have. But they have been few and far between and you don't base things on exceptions. We are using today's standards to look back over the past and judge various things that were done. I submit that if any other organization in the United States Government was submitted to the kind of scrutiny we have been submitted to over the last 27 years that our record would look pretty good in contrast.

We hope these current investigations will produce guidelines for us--guidelines by which we will abide and which we intend to respect. But we hope these guidelines will include some mechanism for change as the perception of the American people of the threat that threatens them changes.

You know, you hear a lot about the negative parts that are cited against us in the Rockefeller Commission's report; what you don't hear is the basic statement: that most of the matters on which the Rockefeller Commission's investigation focused had been corrected by the Agency itself before these investigations started.

Now in the matter of assassinations, of which you've heard a great deal, I do not believe it is in the interests of the United States and its image around the world for us

in the CIA to point a finger at anybody inside, outside, above, or along side the Agency. The Committees are looking into that matter--let them make their report, that will be their responsibility.

You hear all this outrage about the drug experiments. Well, I think President Ford spoke for all of us when he described this tragic situation when this man died--committed suicide--after being experimented on with these drugs. But I think in all fairness we should go back to the atmosphere of that time, the early fifties--I'm talking about something almost a quarter of a century ago. We saw American soldiers for the first time in American history who had been made prisoners, not only refusing to come home, but denouncing their own country. We saw Cardinal Mindzenty and other brave people in Eastern Europe who had resisted all the tortures, pressures and imprisonments by the Nazis suddenly caving in and appearing before us glassy-eyed or hollow-eyed to confess anything their Communist captors wanted them to confess. By and large the American people believed this was being done with mind-controlling drugs. We feared these could be used on our diplomats and on our Armed Forces and an effort was made to find how these things work and how we could counter them. And it wasn't just the CIA or the Armed Forces that was engaging in this. A large number

of institutions of learning in the United States-- universities--did not see anything morally wrong with this. One of the problems is when you try to judge something by the standards of 25 years later, and the perceptions of them. The last great investigation we had into the CIA was the Doolittle investigation and what did they leave us with? They told us the United States was faced with an implacable enemy who was determined to destroy us by all means at their command and that we should match their dedication with ours and their ruthlessness with ours.

So here we are! Rummaging through the garbage pails of history, of events in the 50s and 60s. I just hope that equal time will be given to the late 70s and early 80s because that's when your freedom and mine is going to be decided.

Now we are being pilloried; not just we in CIA, but all of us in intelligence, for our so-called sins of commission. What I am concerned about is that in 1990 at some later investigation, our successors will be asked: You mean you failed to do this? You mean you didn't do that? You mean you weren't watching for this?

You know, we were able to stand a naval Pearl Harbor; I don't know whether we would be able to stand a nuclear Pearl Harbor. As President Ford said yesterday, intelli-

gence is essential to our national security and even survival. We understand that we must operate according to the rules and principles that are acceptable to the American people, but we do not believe that that means we must dismantle the intelligence apparatus of the United States or cripple our capability to collect intelligence on those who might threaten us.

So often we have done this in the past after our various wars: we built up a tremendous apparatus and then we've demolished it. Even today we have an extraordinary situation: we have no legislation to protect our national secrets. I think we're the only nation in the world that doesn't. The only legislation we have is one that prevents people from going to a foreign power and giving them our secrets. If you give our secrets to a newspaper, or publish them or talk about them over the radio, our legislation doesn't cover that.

You know, we're not asking for any special privilege in this area. We would just like to be on an even footing with the Department of Agriculture, the Census Bureau, or the Internal Revenue Service; because in the United States today, if you publish the crop forecast of the Department of Agriculture you can go to jail. If you publish somebody's income tax return, you can go to jail. If you publish certain information from the Census Bureau, you can go to jail. But you can't for giving away the national

defense secrets of the United States.

American companies who have helped us to place our people overseas are being pilloried and damned and berated as though they had done something shameful. What do they expect us to do? Send our people overseas with a sign around their necks saying, "I am a CIA Agent." How naive do they think we are?

As President Kennedy told us, we in intelligence, "...are doomed, when we stumble, to be criticized and ridiculed and our successes are condemned to be passed over in silence." And, believe me, we do have successes. Successes beyond what I had dreamed when I came to this job. We simply do not feel it is reasonable for the United States intelligence agencies to be so pilloried that our friends will refuse to work with us.

Not long ago the head of a friendly foreign service said to me, "Don't you in the United States have legislation against indecent exposure, against taking off your clothes in public?" I said, "Certainly we do." "Well," he said, "tell me something. Why do you practice internationally what you prohibit inside the United States?"

The United States has made a great contribution to intelligence. We collect intelligence in many ways. A large part of it overtly, from the newspapers, from radio broadcasts, and so forth. A large part of it technically

and this, I think, is one of the areas where American inventive genius has made a tremendous and a new contribution to the art of collecting intelligence. We have made another contribution in the field of the application of analysis to the facts and the evidence before us. But in spite of this we still need human intelligence...spies, if you will. No technology, no newspaper will get you inside the decision process of someone to attack or not attack. You need people for that. We have developed these great skills in the United States intelligence community and now we're told that these are a danger to the United States because they may get into the hands of some dictator. Well I trust the American people and I don't think we're going to have any dictator. If we had one then the Armed Forces of the United States would be a danger. The police would be a danger if they got into the hands of a dictator. Well I just don't think the American people are ready to accept any dictator or puppet Congress or anything that is contrary to the Constitution of our country.

We Americans are a hard people for other people to understand and that has good sides as well as bad. You know we don't move in these majestic, slow historical curves like other nations. I was a young corporal in

the Army in 1941 when France had fallen, the German thrust in Russia was moving forward at 30 miles a day and the extension of military service in the United States was approved by the United States Congress by one vote majority. Five months later we were at war all over the world.

But we face another problem today. We face a different kind of attack that is perhaps more dangerous than the attack across the borders or across the seas or out of the skies. It is a new form of war. I would simply like to read to you what a Chinese writer wrote 2,500 years ago in a book called, The Art of War, and if any of it sounds familiar to you, it sounds familiar to me too. This manwriting 25 centuries ago was describing how you undo your enemies, and this is what he said, "The most consummate art is to subdue your enemies without having to fight them on the battlefield. The direct method of war is necessary only on the battlefield; but it is only the indirect methods that can lead to true victory and its consolidation. Denounce everything that is good in your opponent's country. Involve their leaders in criminal operations, undermine them by every means and expose them to the public scorn of their fellow countrymen. Use the vilest type of individual. Cause trouble by every means at hand within their government. Spread discord and quarrels among the citizens of the opposing country. Agitate the young against the old.

Destroy by all means the weapons, supply and discipline of your opponent's armed forces. Cover with ridicule their old traditions and their heritage. Be generous in your offers and rewards to purchase information or accomplices. Put secret agents in place everywhere. Never stint on money or promises and thus you will reap a rich reward." Those words were written 25 centuries ago and all I ask you gentlemen is to look around you all over the world and see what is going on.

But I am not a pessimist. I have faith in the good sense of the American people and that that good sense will prevail. The good sense of their representatives and their fairness will prevail. The U.S. will come through these present difficulties.

You know if we look at the whole 6,000 years of human history of which we have a record, we can see a current flowing in the direction of greater freedom and dignity for every individual. And many tyrants in the past have been able temporarily to stem that flow. None of them has ever been able to stem it permanently. And I do not think that the medieval tyranny of modern communism is going to stem it either.

One of the problems we have, though, is that so many of our people find the need to berate the United States, to run us down. To run down the achievements that we have



done as a people. You know, our society is not perfect and we know it, and we're trying to improve it. But we're not like the people who already think they are in Paradise and there is nothing to improve. Yes, there are shortcomings in our society, but we have given the greater percentage of our people a chance at the good things of life than any other society that man has devised since we came out of the caves.

Not long ago I was in Taiwan, Formosa, and I was taken to visit the National Palace Museum where are stored the treasures of Chinese history. My guide was a young Chinese girl student who spoke beautiful English, and at the end of the visit she said to me, "What do you think of all this?" And I said, "You know, it leaves me kind of thoughtful. When I look at the 6,000 years of your history compared to the 200 years of our history." And she smiled and she said, "Yes, that is only half a dynasty, isn't it?" And I thought for a minute and I said, "Yes, but in that half a dynasty we went from an empty continent to walk the silent face of the moon." And only Americans have walked that silent face of the moon.

We have fought great wars in this century. We have annexed no territory; we have compelled no one to become an American citizen. Quite the contrary, when the war

was over we stretched out our hands to those we had defeated and we pulled them back to their feet. We are the only nation in history who has ever financed its competitors back into competition with us. There is no parallel for what we have done as a nation and we have nothing to be ashamed of.

Thirty-four years ago I came into the Army as a young soldier. I am as proud today, as I told you already, of my association with those who work in American intelligence--in the FBI, the CIA, and Army and Navy and Air Force intelligence--as I am of my service in the Armed Forces. These are devoted defenders of the United States and they fight on a silent battlefield of intelligence on which we have not chosen to fight, but we have been made to fight--not through our own choice. These people are no threat to America's freedom; they are its defenders against those who would destroy us.

Every morning as I go to work, as I enter the building where I work, I look on my right and cut into the stone wall I see those stars that memorialize those men and women of my organization who have laid down their lives in defense of your freedom and mine as truly as anyone who ever fell on the noisier battlefields. I look across to the other wall and I see the motto of our organization which is: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Sometimes I wonder if the world in which we live now should not change that motto to read: You must know the truth for only the truth will keep you free.

The real issue before the American people today is not the truth or the falsehood of some of these solitary allegations, some of them reaching back a quarter of a century. The real issue facing the American people today is the following: Is the United States as a free and democratic nation going to have eyes to see and ears to hear or are we going to stumble into the future blind and deaf until the day we have to choose between abject humiliation and nuclear blackmail--that's the real issue facing the American people today.

Winston Churchill told my generation that on our journey our only companion would be "...blood, sweat, tears and toil." And as our nation journeys into the last quarter of this century I hope we have three companions with us for that journey. I hope we have faith, for dark is the road of the man who walks without faith. I hope we have enthusiasm, which drives the young and motivates the older. And most of all I hope we have courage, which is the greatest of all virtues because it is the guarantee of all the others. With God's help and your support, we will not let the United States down.